

Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 201683 TOSEC 090119

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WHITE HOUSE FOR BRZEZINSKI ONLY

FOLLOWING REPEAT TEL AVIV 6301 ACTION SECSTATE AUG 24

QUOTE S E C R E T TEL AV IV 6301

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STADIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, MMOL, IS, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTER WEIZMAN: PRODUCTION OF A NEW
FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

REF: TEL AVIV 6266

1. WHILE MEETING WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE WIEZMAN
AUGUST 22 ON SUBJECT OF ISRAELI-IRANIAN COOPERATION IN
WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT AND CO-PRODUCTION, HE RAISED
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SUBJECT OF ISRAEL DEVELOPMENT OF A FOLLOW-ON FIGHTER
AIRCRAFT COMPARABLE OT THE F16/F18 SERIES.

2. DESCRIBING THIS PROJECT AS HIS "CRAZY IDEA,"
WEIAMAN SAID HE BELIEVES THAT SUCH A PROGRAM IS INDICATED
IN ORDER TO CONTINUE TO IMPORVE UTILIZATION OF THE
EXISTING ISRAELI AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURING INFRASTRUCTURE

AND AERONAUTICAL DEVELOPMENT CAPABILITY. HE ANTICIPATES THAT SUCH A PROJECT WOULD TAKE 6-8 YEARS AND WOULD REQUIRE AN INITIAL ONE BILLION DOLLARS TO DEVELOP PROTOTYPES AND TO START A PRE-PRODUCTION LINE. WEIZMAN PRE-SUPPOSES IRANIAN INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION IN SUCH A PROGRAM. HE ARGUES THE NEED FOR DEVELOPMENT OF AN AIRCRAFT THAT COULD RESPOND TO THE IMMEDIATE THREAT ENVIRONMENT FACING ISRAEL AND IRAN RATHER THAN RELIANCE ON U.S. AIRCRAFT DESIGNED TO RESPOND TO DIFFERENT AND MORE COMPLEX WORLDWIDE THREAT ENVIRONMENTS.

3. WEIZMAN BELIEVES THAT A PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTION EXISTS RELATING TO THE U.S. POSITION ON SUCH A PROPOSAL, VIZ.: SHOULD THE U.S. ALLOW FRIENDLY NATIONS TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN SYSTEMS; HIS ANSWER IS A RUSOUNDING "YES*" IF THE U.S. WERE TO BACK SUCH A PROJECT, AND ESPECIALLY IF THE U.S. AEROSPACE INDUSTRY WERE INVOLVED, WEIZMAN ASSERTS THAT IRAN WOULD HAVE AN AIRCRAFT SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR ITS ENVIRONMENT AND IN THE PROCESS ISRAEL'S AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY WOULD RECEIVE A BADLY NEEDED SHOT IN THE ARM.

4. THE ARICRAFT WEIZMAN IS THING ABOUT WOULD NOT BE A FOLLOW-ON TO THE KIFR, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZES AS A "GOOD APPLICATION OF SOMETHING FRENCH." ALTHOUGH A VERY GOOD AIRCRAFT, THE AMOUNT OF ISRAELI INPUT INTO THE
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KIFR IS "HIGHLY EXXAGGERATED."

5. ALTHOUGH WEIZMAN BROUGHT UP THIS SUBJECT IN THE MIDDLE OF A DISCUSSION ON CURRENT ISRAELI-IRANIAN NEGOTIATIONS ON OTHER WEAPONS SYSTEMS, HE WAS VERY SPECIFIC IN SAYING THAT THIS WAS NOT PART OF THE CURRENT PACKAGE AND HAS NOT BEEN FORMALLY DISCUSSED WITH THE IRANIANS. HE ALSO STATED THAT SALES OF THE KFIR TO IRAN HAVE NOT BEEN DISCUSSED, AND THAT HE SAW NO POTENTIAL IRANIAN INTEREST IN THE KIFR.

6. COMMENT: WE ARE ALL AWARE OF ISRAEL AIRCRAFT INDUSTRIES' INTEREST IN DEVELOPING A FOLLOW-ON FIGHTER AS OPPOSED TO BUYING THE F16. WE BELIEVE THE AIR FORCE REMWINS CONVINCED IT NEEDS THE F16. NONETHELESS, THIS MAY WELL HAVE BEEN THE OPENING ROUND OF AN EVENTUAL ISRAELI PROPOSAL FOR U.S. SUPPORT OF A GO-IT-ALONE (ALBEIT WITH OUR HELP) DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. WEIZMAN DEFINITELY PLANS TO DISCUSS THIS IDEA DURING HIS NOVEMBER TRIP TO WASHINGTON. LEWIS. UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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